

New charges filed against terror suspect

BY CHRIS ROBERTS

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EL PASO — New charges were filed Friday against a 19-year-old New York man accused of planning to fight with and supply a Somali terrorist organization.

Mark Robert Walker of Rochester, N.Y., was charged with attempting or conspiring to contribute goods or services to a specially designated global terrorist organization.

Walker is accused of planning to fight with and supply night vision goggles and bullet-resistant vests to Ittihad Al Islamiya, listed as a terrorist group by the U.S. government.

The new charge carries a maximum jail sentence of 10 years and a fine of \$50,000.

Charges previously filed against Walker of providing support or resources to a foreign terrorist organization, which carried a maximum sentence of 15 years and fine of \$250,000, were dropped.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Greg McDonald declined comment after the short hearing.

"After reviewing the evidence, the new charge more accurately reflects what the investigation uncovered," said Daryl Fields, a spokesman for the U.S. attorney's office. "The conduct alleged is the same."

An El Paso FBI agent has said Walker was "not a major terrorist or a threat to us."

William Maynard, an assistant federal public defender for Walker, declined comment. But when asked if Walker's actions were being taken out of context, he responded: "It may be. I agree with the (FBI) agent."

Walker was arrested on Nov. 6 by U.S. Customs and Border Protection agents as he crossed from Juárez, Mexico, into El Paso.

According to a criminal complaint filed in the case, after his arrest Walker told a U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement agent that he planned to fight with Ittihad Al Islamiya. He said he didn't intend to fight against the United States or its interests.

The group, which the Treasury Department listed as a "specially designated global terrorist organization" in 2001, wants to remove Somalia's current government and replace it with an Islamic system.

Walker, according to the complaint, told the agent that he planned to use \$2,100 he had in \$100 bills to buy the goggles and vests.

The complaint also states that an FBI source identified Walker as an administrator for a jihadist Web site who was posting communications about his hatred of the United States under the name of "Abdullah."



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Mark Robert Walker (wearing glasses), a 19-year-old student arrested after federal officials linked him to a Somali terrorist group, and other federal prisoners are escorted by a U.S. marshal Friday to a bus for transportation to the El Paso County Detention Facility.